

VZCZCXRO6113  
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH  
DE RUEHPF #0191/01 0331004  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 021004Z FEB 07  
FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7962  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3129

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PHNOM PENH 000191

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS; EAP/RSP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [PTER](#) [SMIG](#) [CB](#)

SUBJECT: CAMBODIAN VIEWS OF THE ASEAN AND EAS SUMMITS IN  
CEBU

1. (SBU) Summary. Cambodia came away from the Cebu meetings pleased with the ASEAN declaration on migrant workers, the Convention on Counterterrorism, and the shortened timeframe from 2020 to 2015 for the establishment of an ASEAN economic community. Cambodia remains keen to see comprehensive regional integration that can help narrow the development gap between Cambodia and other ASEAN countries. Regarding the ASEAN Charter, Cambodia has mixed feelings regarding the issue of voting versus consensus and will likely favor a compromise that seeks the middle ground between the two ends of the decisionmaking spectrum. Cambodia was also pleased that the Japanese government is committed to playing a stronger role with the newer members of ASEAN. The EAS discussion on energy issues was also important for Cambodia, and appears to have prompted renewed talks with the Vietnamese on overlapping maritime claims between the two countries. End Summary.

Cambodia Pleased with Summit Results  
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2. (SBU) MFA Secretary of State for ASEAN Affairs, Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, met with Pol/Econ Chief on January 31 and discussed RGC reaction to the Cebu meetings of the 12th ASEAN Summit and the second EAS Summit. Kao Kim Hourn said that some ASEAN members were unhappy with their Filipino hosts and felt that the domestic political problems of President Arroyo had tainted the GOP's ASEAN chairmanship. He also noted that the meetings were somewhat compressed and that not all leaders were able to stay for the meetings due to travel schedules. When asked what had impressed the RGC concerning the meetings, Kao Kim Hourn immediately pointed to the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers as an outcome of significant importance to the Cambodian government. As Cambodia will remain a sending country with bilateral migration issues with its ASEAN neighbors, the Declaration was an important starting point for recognizing the collective need to protect migrant workers, he said.

3. (SBU) Cambodia was also pleased with the collective ASEAN resolve on the issue of combating terrorism, as Cambodia will continue to be a responsive regional and international partner on CT issues, affirmed Kao Kim Hourn. Increased information sharing and regional cooperation is needed, and the MFA official expressed satisfaction that ASEAN member states share a common view on CT issues. Kao Kim Hourn was also pleased with the desire to narrow the development gap between the more advanced ASEAN economies and those in the developing stage, such as Cambodia. The more economic integration that occurs within ASEAN, the better for Cambodia's overall development, said Kao Kim Hourn, who equates integration with investment -- something Cambodia

needs. Kao Kim Hourn acknowledged that more work needs to be done to develop the kind of regional economic community envisaged by the Eminent Persons Group (EPG), but the MFA official remains optimistic that such a vision is in the best interests of ASEAN in general, and Cambodia, in particular.

¶4. (SBU) Concerning the ASEAN charter, Kao Kim Hourn said that he agreed with the report issued by the EPG and was pleased that ASEAN included the full report on its website, as it should be available to all citizens of ASEAN. In terms of its recommendations, however, Kao Kim Hourn allowed that the voting issue was contentious among ASEAN members. He said that Cambodia's position was expressed by the Prime Minister, who said that Cambodia would continue to prefer the traditional ASEAN approach of reaching consensus on issues of political sensitivity. At the same time, however, the PM reportedly said that there may be occasions whereby a different ASEAN configuration for participation would be acceptable, i.e., ASEAN 8 or ASEAN 9, and that should not always be dictated by consensus. (Note: The Cambodia PM remains unhappy that ASEAN is held hostage to the issue of Burma, and would prefer to see more flexibility in ASEAN participation in international fora that would not demand the inclusion of Burma. End Note.) Concerning the issue of suspending or disciplining members, Hun Sen also reportedly indicated that Cambodia would support a member's right to withdraw from the organization. Concerning the issue of voting versus consensus, Kao Kim Hourn said that two ASEAN members strongly supported voting (Philippines and Indonesia), one supported consensus (Burma), and the rest fell somewhere in the middle. The MFA official speculated that the eventual report to be considered in Singapore in November 2007 would likely promote a compromise position on this issue.

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¶5. (SBU) Another issue of interest to Kao Kim Hourn was the discussion over the role of the ASEAN Secretariat and how the office might be strengthened. He said that two additional Deputy Secretary General positions are to be established, and that the Secretariat will be working more with academic organizations and regional think tanks to consider how best ASEAN economic integration should proceed.

¶6. (SBU) Kao Kim Hourn said that the RGC was very pleased to see the Government of Japan indicate its intention to work more closely with the newer members of ASEAN. The MFA official said that during the Cebu meetings, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam agreed to support GOJ resolutions against North Korea at the United Nations, although he said that Laotian support might be shaky. He noted that Japanese influence and assistance would help all three countries bridge the development gap between their economies and those in the rest of ASEAN.

¶7. (SBU) On the EAS, Kao Kim Hourn had little to say beyond what is expressed in the EAS public statements. He did note that the central theme regarding energy has prompted Vietnam and Cambodia to more seriously begin discussions regarding the offshore overlapping maritime claims between the two countries. There are likely offshore oil and gas reserves in the overlapping claims area with Vietnam, just as there are with Thailand, and both the Vietnamese and Cambodian governments are to begin further discussions regarding the maritime boundary between the two countries, said Kao Kim Hourn.

Comment  
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¶8. (SBU) Kao Kim Hourn will be the RGC's representative to the EPG's high-level drafting committee, which will continue to refine the draft ASEAN charter for presentation to the ASEAN Summit in November 2007 in Singapore. There was little that was surprising in his remarks, as the issues of greatest

concern track with Cambodia's interest in seeing the less developed members of ASEAN receive the maximum benefits from a more integrated regional economic bloc. Kao Kim Hourn acknowledged that there was little discussion regarding Burma at the meetings, but confirmed to us (again) that the Prime Minister had been invited to Burma and would be visiting Rangoon this year. End Comment.  
MUSSOMELI